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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002139

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [AM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: ANNUAL ARMENIA PROCLAMATION: GOT SENSITIVITIES

(U) Classified by DCM Robert S. Deutsch. Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: MFA DG Tezcan expressed the GOT's opposition to use of the term "genocide" in referring to the events of 1915 and asked the U.S. to refrain from using that term in connection with the April commemoration events. DCM encouraged the GOT to renew efforts to reconcile views of history and to seek ways to improve relations with Armenia. End Summary.

2. (C) On March 28, at the MFA's request, DCM met with Ecvet Tezcan, DG for Intelligence and Research. Tezcan, who was accompanied by DDG for the Americas Suna Ilıcak, wanted to highlight Turkey's concern regarding the content of President Bush's upcoming April 24 Armenia proclamation. The GOT had learned that 104 Congressmen had jointly sent a letter to the President asking that this year he use the word "genocide" in describing the events of 1915.

3. (C) Tezcan underlined Turkish sensitivities about the use of genocide, reminding DCM that characterization of the 1915 events as genocide would affect bilateral relations, as it had with France. He described U.S.-Turkey relations as fundamentally close and durable, but he urged that we not add a further "test" by making an issue of what, from the Turkish perspective, ought to be a matter for historians.

4. (C) Harkening back to the year 2000 debate regarding the commemoration, Tezcan called the annual commemoration a "sword of Damocles" for our bilateral relationship. He expressed displeasure with the use in last year's proclamation of the word "massacre," but he did not push the point. He thought that certain groups might view the current U.S.-Turkish "problems" over northern Iraq as an opportunity to profit at Turkey's expense, but he asked that the USG recognize the dangers of stirring centuries' old hatreds in the region at this time.

5. (C) The DCM replied that the USG recognizes Turkey's sensitivity on this topic. He added that we had always found ways to address the issue, but we encourage Turkey to reinvigorate the attempts to reconcile differing views of history. We also encourage Turkey to facilitate steps to put Armenian-Turkish bilateral relations on a "better footing," such as opening the border.

PEARSON